



Pictured: Bright Tulipa
'Gudoshnik' in a sea of
forget-me-nots

Bulb *bonanza*

Leigh Clapp enjoys the spring scene at Bates Green in Arlington, resplendent with late narcissi and tulips amongst a tapestry of lush groundcovers, adjoining their bluebell wood that's now bursting with colour

Carolyn McCutchan has been developing the gardens at Bates Green since 1968, around a 200-year-old gamekeepers' cottage, formerly owned by her in-laws. With the help of her husband John, Carolyn has re-designed the layout into a variety of distinct areas to enable plants from different ecological conditions to thrive, including stunning borders, meadows, woodland and a kitchen garden. The result is a textural tapestry of colour and form using an extensive range of plants, prized for both their flowers and foliage. Masterful combinations create a real "wow factor" for visitors; from spring to autumn there is always something beautiful to admire.

Gardening has been a passion for Carolyn since childhood. "I was introduced to gardening at the age of three and I am still interested, or even obsessed, some might say! Beth Chatto and the late Christopher Lloyd have given me most inspiration with their gardens and books," she explains. The woodland garden, fresh and invigorating in spring, owes much to Beth Chatto's garden in Colchester with its delightful layering of shade-tolerant plants, including pulmonarias, Anemone nemorosa, violets, dicentra, Thalictrum aquilegifolium, epimedium, Melica uniflora albida, aquilegias, unfurling ferns and Erythronium 'Pagoda'. Late narcissi in whites and soft yellows add splashes of sunshine to the scene and benches are placed to allow time to really soak up the vistas. "I make time to sit on one of the many benches to admire lush new growth everywhere and try not to think of tasks needing urgent attention," smiles Carolyn.

In contrast to the informal woodland and meadow areas, the hedged formal garden is planted in four sections, each with its own colour scheme: orange with blue, red with purple, pinks with magenta and white, blue and yellow. Tulips and blossom carry the scheme in spring and herbaceous choices, such as knifophias, heleniums and dahlias,

Pop-up Plant Recycling Event

Sunday 18 May, Newtimber Place

As part of Chelsea Fringe Brighton and Brighton Festival Fringe

A plant and garden exchange - open to anyone who has an abundance of seedlings, plants they've divided, or ones that have outgrown their space or are no longer wanted and can give away. All in the name of sustainable gardening and recycling.

Get the look



woodland wonders

Choose shade-tolerant plants

Mulch with woodchip

Plant in layers - groundcovers, shrubs, tree canopy

Spring bulbs are followed by herbaceous woodland plants and cyclamen in autumn

Many woodland bulbs flower before leaf is on the

deciduous canopy

Plant in drifts in a natural style

Plants to use: pulmonaria, hellebore, snowdrop, anemone, narcissi, epimedium, fritillaria, forget-me-not, bluebell, trillium, polygonatum geranium, dicentra, erythronium, euphorbia, lamium, thalictrum, aquilegia

Left: Carolyn takes a moment in the woodland area

Top: Dappled light in the bluebell wood

later in the season. "Some plants are in common to tie it all together, such as Alchemilla mollis and miscanthus. It's like being an artist; I always keep dabbling with colours. It is quite a challenge but good fun and necessitates the need to buy new plants if I see something needs editing," says Carolyn.

Carolyn and John enjoy sharing the garden with visitors and have opened the garden through the National Gardens Scheme for the past 25 years. This year visits are by appointment, so why not arrange a time that coincides with the peak time for their adjacent bluebell wood? Since 1972 the couple has opened their 23-acre ancient wood and during that period more than 60 different charities have benefited financially. Carolyn, their daughter Philippa and husband Michael Vine have now formed the Bluebell Walk Partnership to ensure access to these picturesque woods, with their carpets of white anemones and native bluebells,

continues into the future. To complete your visit, enjoy the fare in the café and you may like to take home some produce from the farm shop. "The intense blue haze and scent within ancient Beaton's Wood is so special. Charities benefit by participating in the manning of the refreshment barn, making and serving their own food and welcoming visitors. The ten disability scooters we have available become more and more popular for those with mobility difficulties, so they too are able to see the bluebells," adds Carolyn. ■

Opening times.

Bates Green, Arlington, BN26 6SH

Visitors welcome by appointment, March to October, excluding August

Admission £4, children free

Tel: 01323 485152; www.batesgreen.co.uk

Arlington Bluebell Walk, café and farm shop

Every day Thursday 17 April to Sunday 18 May (10am-5pm). www.bluebellwalk.co.uk



Plant of the month

Epimedium x perralchicum

Common name barrenwort
 Clump-forming perennial
 Semi-evergreen to evergreen
 Tiny stands of flowers spring to early summer
 Occur naturally in lightly shaded deciduous woodland

Growing notes

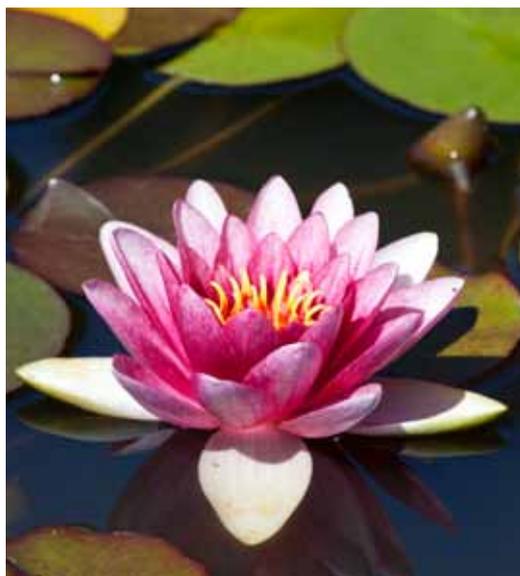
Fully hardy
 Fertile, moist, well-drained soil
 Part shade
 Cut back previous season's foliage in late winter



Child's play

Get the children out in the fresh air to help dig, pot and plant or create their own garden area. There is a wide range of lightweight tools and colourful accessories available. To ensure success choose easy to grow plants such as sunflowers, poppies and daisies or encourage edible crops such as wild strawberries, lettuce and mini-vegetables

Action PLAN for May



Pond life

Divide and plant waterlilies. Plant up bog gardens. Feed large aquatic plants by inserting slow-release tablets below the soil level around base of plant. Keep water features and ponds topped up. Plant vigorous aquatic plants in baskets to contain them, topped with layer of gravel. Providing some shade will reduce algae.

Floral abundance

Plant hanging baskets, containers and window boxes for a beautiful display by summer. Reliable choices include lobelia, campanula, fuchsias, pelargoniums, tradescantia and petunias. In the garden finish sowing hardy annuals. Divide perennials. Plant dahlias and chrysanthemums. Water plants as needed using collected rainwater and recycled grey water.

